

VZCZCXYZ0013
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #3655/01 2980449
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 250449Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0924
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1412
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1504
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7573
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//OSD/ISA/EAP//
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 003655

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV MNUC KS KN
SUBJECT: FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER HAN SUNG-JOO'S OCTOBER
17-21 VISIT TO PYONGYANG

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On October 24, POL M/C met with Han Sung-joo, Korea University Professor and former ROK Ambassador to the United States (2003-2004) and Foreign Minister (1993-1994), to discuss his October 17-21 visit to North Korea as part of a 21-person ROK delegation to attend an exhibition honoring former ROK composer Yun Isang. In a private capacity, Han met with Lee Jong-hyuk, head of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee (equivalent to the ROK Ministry of Unification) and discussed the North Korean nuclear issue. Lee claimed that (1) the DPRK conducted its nuclear test to demonstrate its nuclear technological capability, (2) its ultimate goal was denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and (3) resolution of the nuclear issue depended on the U.S. attitude. Lee also held separate meetings with Park Jae-kyu, former ROK Unification Minister (2000-2001), who was visiting as head of the Yun Isang Foundation in Seoul. According to Han, Park went to North Korea with instructions from Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok. Han would not speculate on what MOU Lee might have passed to the North via Park--who attended the inter-Korean summit in 2000 as Unification Minister--but noted that Lee stressed to him that the nuclear issue could not be resolved by a North-South summit. END SUMMARY.

•
READOUT ON MEETING WITH APPC HEAD LEE JONG-HYUK

¶2. (C) In an October 24 meeting with POL M/C, Korea University Professor Han Sung-joo described his October 17-21 visit to North Korea where he met with Lee Jong-hyuk, head of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, which is equivalent to the South Korean Ministry of Unification (MOU). Han explained that he traveled to North Korea as part of a 21-member South Korean delegation to attend an annual exhibition honoring the composer Yun Isang (1917-1995). (NOTE: According to press reports, Yun was born in South Korea but spent most of his life in Germany. Yun visited the DPRK in the 1960s, was arrested as a communist spy by the ROK, and was later released. The DPRK has held annual commemorations for Yun over the past two decades. END NOTE.)

¶3. (C) Although 40 other ROK musicians and academics canceled their participation in the event following the October 9 nuclear test, Han chose to take advantage of his first opportunity to visit North Korea since 1985. For a

time he was barred from entering North Korea because his articles were deemed too critical of the DPRK, he noted. He wanted to use this occasion to meet DPRK officials to get a better sense of their current perspectives on the nuclear issue. (NOTE: Han Sung-joo served as ROK Foreign Minister during the 1993-1994 nuclear standoff with North Korea under then President Kim Young-sam. Han later served as President Roh Moo-hyun's Ambassador to the United States 2003-2004. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) Han said that APPC Head Lee Jong-hyuk emphasized that the DPRK sought the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue and its ultimate goal was denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Lee claimed that the DPRK conducted the nuclear explosion to check its technological capabilities and to demonstrate that North Korea possessed a weapon. The North had withstood U.S. sanctions for fifty years and would weather any additional sanctions. That said, from the North's viewpoint the Banco Delta Asia issue was only the tip of the iceberg in terms of possible "sanctions" faced by North Korea. Han asked why the North was unwilling to discuss issues of concern like financial issues within the Six Party Talks. Lee replied that there was too much mistrust between the DPRK and United States, so the United States needed to directly show through its action (haengdong) that it could be trusted.

¶5. (C) Han also discussed Lee's perceptions of DPRK foreign relations. Lee opined that Secretary Rice had been somewhat less hostile and more forthcoming during her mid-October visit to Asia, which was encouraging for the DPRK. Lee admitted that the DPRK relationship with China was "tight" at the moment, but thought it would improve in due course. The relationship with Russia had not changed very much and there were few problems. Turning to South Korea, Lee insisted that the nuclear issue could not be resolved by North-South meetings or a summit. The Koreas would have to wait until progress was made between the DPRK and the United States, Lee said.

• SPECULATION ON ROKG MESSAGE FOR LEE JONG-HYUK

¶6. (C) Professor Han also mentioned that APPC head Lee Jong-hyuk held separate talks with Park Jae-kyu, who was Unification Minister from 2000-2001 and attended the June 2000 summit between then President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. Park was visiting North Korea as head of the Yun Isang Foundation in Seoul, but, according to Han, Park also carried instructions from Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok. Han said he did not know what message MOU Lee might have passed to the North via former MOU Park. Instead, Han reiterated his sense that either Lee Jong-hyuk was intentionally misleading him to build cover for the Park-Lee meeting or the North was not interested in an inter-Korean summit at this time. Han reiterated that Lee said the nuclear issue could not be resolved by inter-Korean meetings. Han opined that his North Korean interlocutors asked questions suggesting that they, too, were skeptical that Roh was someone who could "deliver" on promises, suggesting to Han that the North would be reluctant to hold a summit at this point.

¶7. (C) According to Han, Lee stated that he returned early from a four-country trip to Europe after stops in Germany and Belgium in order to be able to meet with members of the visiting ROK delegation. Han surmised that either Lee received an especially cold welcome from the Europeans and cut short an unproductive trip, or he wanted to return to receive Park Jae-kyu and a message from MOU Lee Jong-seok.

• LEE JONG-HYUK

¶8. (C) Professor Han characterized Lee Jong-hyuk as an influential person in the DPRK leadership. Lee was technically the vice-chairman of the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, but since the post of chairman had remained vacant

since the death of Kim Yong-sun in 2003 Lee was the point-man on inter-Korean relations. Han theorized that one could decipher an official's level of influence in the DPRK by looking at the emphasis the person placed on regurgitating rhetoric on Kim Jong-il; the higher the person, the less he needed to stick to the script. At the beginning of their meeting, Han asked Lee to skip the linguistic acrobatics so they could get to the heart of the matter. Lee, who was born in 1936, readily accepted the suggestion and cut to the chase.

VERSHBOW